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ABSTRACT

This research presents the results of a 10-week qualitative case study that followed the journey of a limited literacy, grade six student as he progressed through a 10-week, one-on-one intensive literacy intervention. A limited literacy student is defined as a student, who has been identified as functioning two or more years behind their peers in reading and writing. This paper focused on changes in reading behaviors, such as word recognition, decoding, comprehension and metacognition. The results show that responsive, explicit and meaningful instruction, targeted to meet student needs does have a positive impact on student learning. Significant improvements were observable not only in reading, but also in writing, spelling, attitude towards literacy learning and student self-confidence. (Author/RS)

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Reading Intervention For Struggling Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

This research presents the results of a ten-week qualitative, case study. This case study followed the journey of a limited literacy, grade six student as he progressed through a ten week, one-on-one intensive literacy intervention. A limited literacy student is defined as a student who has been identified as functioning two or more years behind their peers in reading and writing.

This paper focused on changes in reading behaviors such as word recognition, decoding, comprehension and metacognition. The results show that responsive, explicit and meaningful instruction, targeted to meet student needs does have a positive impact on student learning.

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RESEARCH QUESTION

What impact will a 10 week, daily (40 minute), one-on-one reading intervention have on the *literacy/reading skills* of a limited literacy middle school student?

- What demonstrated growth will the student show in fluency decoding and word recognition?
- What demonstrated growth will the student show in comprehension?
- What demonstrated growth will the student show in awareness and use of metacognition?

METHODOLOGY

My research was a qualitative, action based, single subject case study.

Data was primarily reported in a qualitative form:

- daily interactions and audiotapes
- daily lesson logs
- entrance and exit interviews with student parents and classroom teachers

- in-class observations.
- Many of the assessments were also designed to be more qualitative in nature.

Quantitative measures were used for entrance and exit assessment using a combination of standardized and diagnostic assessments.

TASK

The intervention used in my research was the *Later Literacy* © (1995). This program was developed and field-tested in Scarborough, Ontario, Canada by Joyce MacDonald and her colleagues. The program was designed for use with students in grades 4 - 9 who are at-risk for academic failure as a result of limited literacy skills (achieving 2 or more grade levels behind their peers).

The framework for the program was based on Marie Clay's, Reading Recovery © with appropriate adaptations to address the literacy needs of older students.

The program is based on current research by educators such as Donald Graves, Judith Irvin and Marie Clay.

RESULTS: Standardized Assessments

Jerry John's Informal Reading Assessment (1997)

	Entrance	Exit
Word Recognition		
Independent	Grade 2	Grade 3
Instructional	Grade 3	Grade 6
Frustration	Grade 4	Grade 7
Oral Reading		
Independent	Grade 4	Grade 5
Instructional	Grade 5	Grade 6
Frustration	Grade 6	----

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The Jerry John's Basic Reading Inventory (1997) was selected as a standardized assessment tool because it is a well known reading inventory and it would be useful as a comparison with the assessments designed for specific use with the Later Literacy © program.

RESULTS: Later Literacy © Assessments

	Entrance	Exit
Fluency -Holistic Rating Scale	1	4
Retelling -Holistic Rating Scale	2	4-5
Writing: Holistic Rating Scale • Content • Conventions	 2 3	 4 4
Spelling Accuracy	61 %	93 %
DON Word Test (age band)	8.5-8.11	10.6-11.00
DON Spelling Test (grade level)	2.9	3.7
Word Solving: * Reading Words (decoding)	 20%	 48%

These assessments were designed, piloted and normed by J. MacDonald and her colleagues at the English Language Centre in Scarborough, Ontario for exclusive use with the Later Literacy © program.

LATER LITERACY©ASSESSMENTS and RUBRICS

- Holistic Rating Scale for Oral Reading Fluency
- Holistic Rating Scale for Oral Retelling
- Holistic Rating Scale for Writing
- DON Word Test & Scale
- DON Spelling Test & Spelling Scale
- Appellations *
- Analysis of Onsets and Rimes *
- Onset & Rime Segments *
- Root Words & Affixes - Decoding

- Root Words & Affixes - Encoding

* *Indicates diagnostic assessment tasks administered at entrance.*

DAILY LESSON FRAMEWORK

Each lesson includes the following 4 inter-related components. Each component is 10 minutes.

- Reading and responding to Familiar Text
- Word Work
- Expository Reading
- Written Expression

Daily lesson plans are an important part of tutorials. They are prepared to guide the lesson and are also used for recording strategies used by the student and strategies prompted by the teacher.

PART ONE: Familiar Narrative text (10 minutes)

- Retelling of independent reading from previous night
- Running record for 1 page - teacher provides clear and specific feedback about observed reading behaviors:

  Praises: Reinforcement of 2 effective reading behaviors
  Prompts: Prompted correction of miscues (2)
  Teaching Points: One thing the teacher observed in the reading that requires explicit instruction

- Teacher poses a deep thinking question

DID YOU KNOW that the student commitment to read 25 minutes per night, at least 5 nights a week, adds up to a MINIMUM of 1250 minutes over the ten weeks?

PART TWO: Word Work (10 minutes)

- **1-50:** The areas for instruction in this part of the lesson are taken directly from the diagnostic entrance assessments and from areas of need identified through daily instruction. 1-50 target items may include high frequency sight or spelling words or word parts.

- **Pronounceable Units (Phonograms):** Students work with 3 different word families each session. First they read a row of 'short' rhyming words, then read 'longer' words containing the pronounceable unit.

- **Affixes:** One prefix or suffix is introduced each day.

** Words are referred to as short or long words, this prevents reinforcing failure if students can't read an EASY word.*

*** Shift from 'sounding' out to 'working' out words... many polysyllabic words CAN'T be sounded out.*

PART THREE: Expository Text

- Text used is at the student's *instructional* level and is read orally and in short chunks
- Teacher activates background knowledge, introduces new vocabulary and key concepts as part of pre-reading discussion
- Strategies for reading non-fiction text are introduced, modeled and supported
- After reading teacher provides praises, prompts and a teaching point

Texts can be selected based on student interest or a curriculum connection.

PART FOUR: Writing

- Teacher guides the writing process with 3-5 questions directly related to the expository reading.
- Student orally rehearses response to the question.
- Student writes his response saying each word as they write it.
- Student checks by flipping over pencil then reads the answer out loud while pointing to each word with the pencil.
- Any uncorrected errors are addressed with teacher support - *All errors are corrected.*

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research showed that an intensive, one-on-one, responsive and explicit literacy intervention can have a significant impact on the literacy learning of a middle school student. Rusty, the student in this case study, showed improvement in all areas of learning. His fluency, decoding, word recognition, comprehension, spelling written expression, spelling and metacognition (in reading and writing) all demonstrated considerable improvements.

The gains were not only measured by entrance and exit scores but also in Rusty's improved confidence and attitude towards learning and positive feedback from his parents and teachers.

" I have improved in my reading because I have a lot more strategies to use. I can read way harder books now. I just like to read. Last year I was so-so in my reading and this year I just don't want to put a book down." Rusty, Exit Interview 11/23/00

RESOURCES

Deidre L. McConnell, International Reading Association 2003

MacDonald, J. (1995). Later Literacy: Teacher's Guidebook. Scarborough, Ontario, Canada.

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